



Laurence A. Rickels. *Nazi Psychoanalysis Volume 3: Psy Fi.* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. xxiii + 347 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8166-3701-0.



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With *Nazi Psychoanalysis*, Laurence Rickels, professor of German and Comparative Literature and adjunct professor of art studio and film studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara, provides the conjunction of Nazism and psychoanalysis with the extensive treatment it deserves. Rickels has written extensively at the margins of literary theory, philosophy, German film and literary studies and has published such singular works as *Aberrations of Mourning* (1988), *The Vampire Lectures* (1999), *The Case of California* (2001), and one edited volume, *Acting Out in Groups* (1999). All but *Aberrations of Mourning* (1988) have appeared with the University of Minnesota Press, known for its exemplary series on literary theory. In this trilogy on Nazi psychoanalysis, a continuation of Rickels' research on psychoanalysis and culture, Rickels not only traces the origin, development, and conclusion of psychoanalysis but also argues that psychoanalysis and Nazism are symptoms of modernity itself. "Psy Fi," the final volume of *Nazi Psychoanalysis*, takes the Nazi imaginary as its central theme. Rickels situates the ineluctable place of Nazi ideology in twentieth-century thought by demonstrating the ways in which the Nazi imagination continues to haunt modern life.

The core thesis of volume three posits one fundamental impulse behind both psychoanalysis and science fiction, which can be found alongside and within the Nazi

canon. To support his claims of continuity between modern life and Nazi Germany, as well as of the effects of psychoanalysis on the present age (a project about which he began writing in 1991), Rickels synthesizes a dense collection of supporting material such as literature, films, case studies, psychological warfare manuals, psychoanalytic journals, advertisements, and popular science fiction. Rickels' theoretical edifice is equally diverse, employing Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht, Deleuze and Guattari, Heidegger, and Nietzsche. The bulk of his references are to psychoanalytic texts from WWII and the immediate postwar period. In addition to a wide-range of literary writers such as Goethe, Dá¶bblin, Benjamin, Hitchcock, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Huxley, and H. G. Wells, figures such as Daniel Paul Schreber (made famous through Freud's monograph on paranoia), Hans Dominik, a popular German science fiction author who died in 1945, and Paul Nipkow—the Nazis' adopted' father of television—provide the case studies for this book.[1] As a result, Rickels successfully traces the convergence of psychoanalysis and Nazism and its far-reaching effects on modernity.

Rickels is not, however, the first to intervene in what is often seen as two disparate conversations on psychology and fascism. In numerous ways, this text builds upon the earliest intervention: Wilhelm Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), written from 1930-33, in

which Reich postulated fascism as the “organized political expression” of man’s internal, irrational, biological “life impulse.”[2] In method, style, and content, “Psy Fi” differs from Reich’s general assessment. To begin, Rickels expands the historical horizon, grounding his inquiry into Nazism in popular cultural, literary, and visual documents from the 1930s, 1940s, and beyond. Rickels also clearly differentiates psychoanalysis from psychology and Nazism from fascism. Moreover, Rickels’ methodology expands beyond the traditional Freudian paradigm to contrast the findings and methods of numerous contemporaries of Freud and Reich—among them Alfred Adler, Bruno Bettelheim, and Carl Jung—with the work of G. R. Heyer and other analysts who continued to work in Nazi Germany and the German Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy, the official Nazi institution of psychoanalysis, as well as with post-war psychoanalysts Gregory Bateson, Anna Freud, Karen Horney, and Edith Jacobson (who was herself a political prisoner in Nazi Germany).

Furthermore, as befitting an inquiry into the conjunction of psychoanalysis and Nazism, Rickels engages with Klaus Theweleit’s *Male Fantasies*, a two-volume reformulation of Reich’s argument examining the emotional core of fascism by exploring literature and mass media of the post-WWI era as well as the memoirs of the *Freikorps*, a voluntary army who fought the German working class after WWI.[3] According to Theweleit, in order to protect against the threat of the ego-dissolution in early infancy, the fascist male develops a body armor, which rejects and fortifies itself against emotions such as weakness, fear, and guilt. Through repetitive conditioning of the *Freikorps* groups, these elements were displaced onto shunned social members, such as women, Jews, and Communists. Rickels distinguishes his research from that of Theweleit, whom he criticizes as “overusing latent homosexuality as a cure-all explanation for group or psychotic bonding” (p. 17).

Rickels’ third volume consists of five main sections and a foreword which section of the congruity of psychoanalysis (“psy”) and science fiction (“fi”): “Apart,” “Higher and Higher,” “Mars Attacks,” “Doubles,” and “Epilogues on Fire.” In “psy fi” the presence of science and philosophy lurks, as well as of psychoanalysis and science fiction. The subtitle also points to this work’s most prominent stylistic feature: pervasive word play, double entendre, punning, and allusion are characteristic of Rickel’s highly associative style. This book radically departs from the structure and content of traditional historical monographs, choosing to follow the spirit of psycho-

analysis, which pursues its “truth” though the uncanny connections manifest in dreams, jokes, para-praxis, and symptoms. Indeed, the heart of the book lies in Rickels’ dense elaboration of case studies through linguistic slips and verbal associations, which creates a mode of transference interpretation that depends on the reader’s willingness to engage the otherness of the text.

In the foreword, Goethe scholar Benjamin Bennet, who teaches at the University of Virginia, prepares readers for the stylistic labyrinth in the pages ahead. Bennet situates Rickels’ method outside the limits of postmodern pastiche by aligning his theoretical edifice with that of Johann Georg Hammanns’ *Aesthetics in a Nutshell* (1762). Then, in the opening section, Rickels traces science fiction as a literal tradition in the twentieth century, noting that post-1945 science fiction gets “reinvented” in order to conform to Cold War politics (p. 6). Rickels also locates a shift in the genre and theory of science fiction before and during WWII. As evidence, Rickels outlines three areas of rapport: between the internal body and air space, between the internal body and the body of the group, and between intra-psychic and outer spaces. He then points out the non-coincidental establishment of a psychotherapy institute and an air ministry in the same year. For Rickels, the basis of all science fiction is the conflict between a culture of reproduction (i.e. of the family, of heterosexuality) and a culture of replication, or homosexuality. Similar to the demands on the psyche, all science fiction is based on the conflict between a culture of reproduction and a culture of replication. Rickels sees this genre as the “recasting of reproductive mourning” as replication, or the fantasy of technologization (p. 6). In these ways, we begin to see how the Nazi imaginary, expressed through technology as well as through science fiction or fantasy, connects to the current age (p. 10).

Much of the book revolves around the ways in which psychoanalysis paradoxically continued to be practiced by the Nazi regime, despite its representation of everything the regime despised.[4] In the second section, for example, Rickels explores the development of psychoanalysis during the Nazi period, focusing on the ways in which “psy fi” is a manifestation of fetishism or gadget love. The “psy-fi” merger with technology, using tools and gadgets as extension of the senses and the limbs, represents an alternative to reproduction. The third section of the text, the most ambitious and therefore also the most interesting, continues the exploration of then Nazi fascination with science and technology using the motif of doubling as its guiding principle. Rickels reads examples of technological replication of women (Maria

in Lang's *Metropolis* and Olympia in E. T. A. Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann") as a desire for survival and mortality and argues that these fantasies of seeing, replication, and doubling are fundamental to all technology. Rickels then develops a wide-ranging comparison of early Weimar films such as Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse* (1922), *Frau im Mond* (1929), *Metropolis* (1926), and Erich Pommer's *FP1 antwortet nicht* (1932) with Nazi cinema such as M. W. Kimmich's *Germanin* (1943) and von Baky's *MÄ¼nchhausen* (1943) and with Hollywood blockbusters *Contact* (1997), *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), *Total Recall* (1990), and *True Lies* (1994) to show that Nazism's totalitarian will-to-closure and modernity's obsession with progress are part of the same "psy-fi" era. The fourth section of "Psy Fi" takes Nazi Germany as itself an example of science fiction, demonstrated through research, popular manuals, and especially case studies of psychotics from the 1930s and 1940s. Rickels uses a German psychoanalytic study of airplane pilots' adaptations to rigors of light (above and beyond the rigors of flight) as an example of the cyborg merging of man and machine. The parallel between the importance of flight in war as well as in science fiction provides the ground of such claims. The fifth and final section revisits the arguments of the first, using similarities between Weimar films and recent Hollywood science fiction films to underscore the importance of flight in war as in science fiction. For Nazi Germans and for "psy fi," flight connotes a psychological techno-fantasy of overcoming the material restraints of earthly life, and by extension, avoiding the loss and mourning associated with death.

Rickels' book is successful as a daring, wide-ranging inquiry into previously unexplored or neglected connections between Nazism and psychoanalytic theory. Moreover, Rickels' densely theoretical treatment of his material is novel and provocative. The combination of analytical reflection and symptomatic excess, which marks the psychoanalytic relationship, can be seen throughout this text's organization and presentation. The work remains true to its stated purpose, for the associative style allows Rickels to establish many indirect connections between contemporary life and Nazism through a breathtaking array of sources and to demonstrate his facility with philosophy and psychoanalysis. Key strengths of *Nazi Psychoanalysis* include the author's choice of documents, such as Udo Pini's collection of photographs and advertisements from the Third Reich.

Style, however, is both this text's strength as well as its major weakness. Rather than offering a continuous narrative, *Nazi Psychoanalysis: Volume 3 Psy Fi* offers

a series of case studies on psychoanalysis within Nazi Germany and the ongoing role of Nazism and psychoanalysis in our contemporary age.[5] This text is clearly for neither theoretically timid nor uninitiated readers. Due to the highly associative logic, incessant wordplay, numerous allusions, and the stylistic emphasis on dialogic acts of writing and reading—which translate into tensions, contradictions, and juxtapositions in both topic and method of inquiry—readers will be challenged by this text, a challenge made manifest in the introduction: "Only analytic discursivity is in the position to contain the Nazi symptom, for even historically, the symptom we're all still struggling to bust was already highly saturated with psychoanalysis" (p. xxiii). That this associative style may limit accessibility is a shame, as this topic deserves a broad readership. That caveat aside, this volume will be of enormous value for literary and cultural studies scholars interested in the relationship of modernity, psychoanalysis and Nazism.[6] For those who can digest its self-described, "user-unfriendly" style, *Nazi Psychoanalysis Volume 3: Psy Fi* provides a provocative look at the performance of theory's attachment to its object of inquiry.

Notes

[1]. Daniel Paul Schreber's *Denkwuerdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* (1903) has been most recently translated into English as *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, trans. Ida Macalpine, Richard A. Hunter, and Anne Barton, intro. Rosemary Dinnage (New York: New York Review of Books, 2003). See also the monograph from 1911 on Schreber by Sigmund Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (dementia paranoides)," *Complete Psychological Works, Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, vol. 12 (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), pp. 3-82.

[2]. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Mary Higgins, ed. Mary Higgins and Chester M. Raphael (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970).

[3]. Klaus Theweleit, *Maennerphantasien*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Roter Stern, 1977-78). Translated into English as *Male Fantasies: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) and *Male Fantasies: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

[4]. For a recent, accessible exploration of psycho-

analysis in the Third Reich, see Jame E. Goggin and Eileen Brockman Goggin, *Death of a "Jewish Science": Psychoanalysis in the Third Reich* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2001). See also Geoffrey Cocks, "Repressing, Remembering, Working Through: German Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis, and the 'Missed Resistance' in the Third Reich," *The Journal of Modern History* 64, Supplement: Resistance Against the Third Reich (December 1992): S204-16; Cocks, "Psychoanalyse, Psychotherapie und Nationalsozialismus," *Psyche* 37 (1983), pp. 1057-1106; and Cocks, "The Professionalization of Psychotherapy in Germany 1928-1949," *German Professions 1800-1950*, ed. Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[5]. Readers interested in the psychoanalytic aftermath of Nazism may benefit from reading *Nazism and Psychoanalysis* alongside Dominick LaCapra's work on trauma, history, and psychoanalysis. See in particular the concluding chapter "Psychoanalysis, Memory and the Ethical Turn," in Dominick LaCapra, *History and*

Memory After Auschwitz (London and Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 180-210.

[6]. For theoretical background on how fascism as a psychopolitical movement becomes part of a cultural ethos, see Etienne Balibar, "Fascism, Psychoanalysis and Freudo-Marxism," *Masses, Classes, Ideas*, trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 177-89. For what might be read as an addendum that seeks to differentiate Nazism and fascism while exploring the same psychopolitical paradigm, see Laurence A. Rickels, "Giving up the Ghost of a Fetish: Between the Couples Theory of Marxo-Freudianism and Nazi Psychoanalysis," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 97: 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 297-325.

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